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TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CHINA'S ANTI-SECESSION LAW

**¶1.** Summary: Leading newspapers in Taiwan continued their coverage March 16 of the impact of China's Anti-Secession Law and the U.S. role in the matter, although local politics appeared on the front pages of some of the newspapers. All newspapers carried stories regarding Taiwan Premier Frank Hsieh's remarks that the Chinese law threatens Taiwan with possible war and justifies Taiwan holding a referendum on the issue. Several newspapers linked the ruling party's plan to hold mass demonstration to protest the Anti-Secession Law March 26 to hopes that Washington might have some message for Taiwan after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visits Beijing, although some have also made it clear that the U.S. reaction to the law so far has not been as strong as Taiwan expected. The headline of a page-four news analysis in the conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" reads: "The United States leniently criticizes China. Taipei fails to gain upper hand in cross-Straight wrestle." The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily," in a page-two story, said the decision to hold mass demonstration March 26 allows the Taiwan government sufficient time to gather support and to prepare for a big fight with China.

**¶2.** The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran an editorial again that cautioned the Taiwan people about China's attempt to incrementally annex Taiwan, while both a commentary in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" and an editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence (English-language) "Taipei Times" chose to focus on U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's upcoming visit to China. The "Apple Daily" commentary said Taiwan is waiting to see what Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will say to Beijing regarding the Anti-Secession Law when she visits, and the "Taipei Times" editorial expressed the hope that Rice will see through Beijing's two-faced strategy and discern the true face of China. The pro-unification "United Daily News," on the other hand, questioned President Chen Shui-bian's purpose in joining the mass rally scheduled for March 26 to protest China's anti-secession law, while the pro-unification, limited-circulation (English-language) "China Post" editorial urged Chen to step back from his position of supporting Taiwan independence and to embrace the concept of one China. End summary.

A) "The Ruling and Opposition Parties Should Be Vigilant Against China's Incremental and Imperceptible Annexation of Taiwan"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 800,000] editorialized (3/16):

". Taiwan and China have been two independent sovereign nations, which do not belong to each other. Their interactions will only be restrained by international law and bilateral treaties. The internal law of any one side cannot interfere with the internal affairs of the other. Therefore, China's enactment of the Anti-Secession Law can only satisfy its internal nationalism and hawkish sentiments. The law can never be applied to Taiwan. Frankly speaking, China has always had the ambition to annex Taiwan. Its threat to Taiwan will absolutely not increase or decrease because of the Anti-Secession Law. Whether it will use military force against Taiwan also depends on its capabilities and strength, not on the existence of a legal basis. Consequently, although the people of Taiwan are extremely disgusted with the law and will certainly not accept such brutal and savage treatment of Taiwan by China, and Taiwan should remain vigilant about China's threat, there is no need to be scared. Should the whole nation fall into extreme nervousness, it would very easily lead to popular anxiety and confusion. For example, an internal struggle between the ruling and opposition parties will give the enemy a good chance to exploit [weakness]. That is why the ruling and opposition parties must have a common understanding of this and together speak out to the international community so that the whole world will know the true anti-aggression and anti-annexation wishes of the Taiwan people. ."

B) "Is the United States a Mediator Between the Two Sides of the Taiwan Strait?"

Antonio Chiang, former deputy secretary-general of Taiwan's National Security Council, commented in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (3/16):

". The United States is getting more and more involved in the disputes between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and its role is more than that of a proactive third party [and] has almost reached the level of that of a prestigious senior. Over the past three years, subtle changes have occurred in the triangular relationship between Taipei, Washington and Beijing. Both sides of the Taiwan Strait want to discuss cross-Straight disputes with Washington, and Washington negotiates with both sides in an attempt to prevent tensions from escalating in the Taiwan Strait.

"But the chief requirement for being a `prestigious senior' is impartiality. As an arbitrator, one must at least maintain an image of being unbiased on the surface, or one will fail in the role. If Washington fails to adopt certain measures or place certain pressure on China [regarding the anti-secession law], it will lose its credibility and the trust of Taiwan. Taiwan is waiting to see what U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will say to Beijing when she visits China. During this period of time [prior to Rice's trip], fervent public opinion demonstrated by Taiwan's society can strengthen the bargaining chips to be used by Rice when negotiating with China. .

"In addition to being a mediator, arbitrator or a balancer in the cross-Straight relations, the United States is also a manipulator, and its final aim is not [focused on] Taiwan's democracy but on the United States' own interests. This is a fact that we must not forget."

C) "Rice Should See China's True Face"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] noted in an editorial (3/16):

". We hope that on her trip through Asia, [U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza] Rice will discern the

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true face of China's communist government. There are some signs this [sic] has already happened. Why else would the US have used unusually strong language in its human rights report published on Feb. 28 to condemn China's violations, including the use of the US-led war on terror as a pretext for brutally suppressing Uyghurs and Muslims in China's northwestern Xinjiang Province? The report points out that in 2003, China imprisoned hundreds of thousands of its own people without trial. This is evidence that the result of China's growing economic prosperity and national power has merely been to let a small, corrupt clutch of leaders and their families enjoy the fruits of reform and deregulation, while the Communist Party's monopoly on power and willful disregard for human rights remains unchanged. .

"Rice should see through Beijing's two-faced strategy and realize that in China's repressive regime, there is no such a thing as an enlightened leader. They are all a bunch of thugs whose paramount interest is to preserve the CCP's stranglehold on power. Beijing's autocrats will not risk losing their cherished monopoly on power by introducing a democratic electoral system.

"The US State Department used to harbor the wishful view that China could be peacefully transformed. The belligerent content of the `anti-secession' law shows just how nave and prosperous that idea really is."

D) "To Fight for What? For Whom? To Demonstrate for What? For Whom?"

The editorial of conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 600,000] commented (3/16):

". President Chen has openly called for a one million-person demonstration. However, whether he will personally participate in the demonstration has not been decided thus far. Obviously, even President Chen himself is not clear that is it necessary to demonstrate and to demonstrate for what and for whom? .

"Therefore, in the face of such a situation, President Chen needs to honestly state to the people: Will

President [Chen] decide to end the Taiwan independence line in order to alleviate the cross-Straits situation? Or, the President, while taking necessary steps to counter China's advance, will he continue to promote this line and is ready to face the anti-independence war that China may start under the Anti-secession Law?

"China's legislation of the Anti-secession Law can be seen as a major failure of President Chen's promotion of Taiwan independence. So President Chen must first make a choice among 1) continuing the Taiwan independence line; 2) giving up the independence line; 3) or overtly giving up but covertly continuing this line. Then he can make up his mind: does he really want to join the demonstration and to demonstrate for what and for whom?"

E) "Beyond Venting Indignation, Taiwan Must Practice Realism"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said in an editorial (3/16):

". [W]e must be being [sic] realistic in coping with all the possible risks and difficulties likely to be brought about by the hostile mainland legislation. . Taiwan cannot afford not to live peacefully with a fast rising world power living just next door.

"If the anti-secession law indeed poses a crisis for Taiwan, it also presents a way for us to turn the challenge into an opportunity. Beyond contemplating the military intimidation, Beijing also offers a wide range of proposals for reconciliation. These include opening talks to end the state of hostility and adopting measures to expand travel, transport service and economic exchanges.

"But the reconciliation offer is conditional. President Chen Shui-bian must be willing to step back from his position of supporting independence and instead embrace the concept of one China. Chen's persistent adherence to his ideologically driven stance over the last five years of his administration has been the stumbling block to the improvement of relations with Beijing.

"There is an ancient Chinese saying: He who tied the bell on the tiger's neck is the one to untie it. President Chen who actually prompted Beijing to enact the anti-secession law by his past relentless push for a new Constitution and change to sensitive names to realize de jure independence must move to defuse the risk of war by changing course."

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